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HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS. CHARLES HENRY ROBINSON, D.D.
Charles Scribner's Sons. 1915. Pp. xiv, 533. \$2.50.

The first impression of this book and the impression that abides is that it undertakes what cannot be done. To crowd the story of foreign missions into a single volume, even of five hundred solid pages, is impossible. The author recognizes the difficulty and in the opening sentences of his preface disavows the purpose to attempt any such recital. Instead he will only venture upon an outline sketch which may set forth in correct perspective the fields that invite separate and particular study.

In spite of this modest disclaimer the book stands, both in its title and in its make-up, as a record of the origin and progress of the modern missionary enterprise, as tracing from the birth of the new evangelizing impulse the gradual appearance of missionary societies, great and small, "Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant," their several locations and fields of work, their contacts with the manifold races and religions of the non-Christian world, their developing lines of activity and, last but not least, as furnishing some adequate portrayal of the adventures and achievements which have marked this pathway of human endeavor.

The scheme of the volume is simple and orderly. Seventeen of its twenty-four chapters (iv-xx) deal with so many great lands of the world from India to the Isles of the Pacific. Chapters xxi and xxii treat of missions to Moslems and to Jews, peoples who, while one in their religion, are yet of many races and of many lands. Chapter xxiii, dealing with missionary societies, is practically a list of names and years, valuable for reference, but needing Chapter xxiv on the Outlook in order that the volume may close with such uplift and inspiration as the theme and the author warrant us to expect. For Canon Robinson is admirably qualified to write effectively upon the missionary enterprise. His knowledge is wide and comprehensive; his sympathies are broad; his judgment notably discriminating; his temper fair; his outlook courageous and Christian. The first three chapters of the book reveal the quality of its author. The opening or introductory chapter contains a sober yet strong setting forth of the universality of Christianity, what makes it both in its intent and in its effect a missionary religion. Chapter ii sketches briefly but with firm hand the various methods of work employed from Paul's day to this more complex present, with its medical and educational lines of approach and its department of women's work. Chapter iii furnishes the link that binds the

modern missionary movement to the era of the Reformation. These earlier chapters, being less burdened with detail, are among the most readable portions of the book.

The fact is that from the body of the work the juice is well nigh squeezed out through the terrific compression required and the obligation the author seems to have felt to name all the forces at work in each land with the statistics that mark their outstanding dates, their numbers, and extent of influence. These data, gathered with infinite pains as they must have been, yet, as they have been drawn from many sources, are often so dissimilar in their terms and classification as to leave a confused impression on the mind of the reader, who closes one chapter only to find the experience repeated in another field.

If one is really to feel the force of the foreign missionary movement of the last century, he needs to see with some vividness the habits of life and thought in the missionary lands, the soil into which the missionary message has been cast; to note its different reception in these unlike situations; to watch the variety in approach and in method by which it gradually won its way, and the marvellous result whereby has appeared out of so dissimilar conditions the normal Christian character and type of life. Something of the bulk and irresistible lift of the missionary enterprise, as thus suggested, seems to be lost to sight in these close-packed chapters and paragraphs; we are in danger of not seeing the forest for the trees.

The lack is made all the more evident from the fact that here and there through the book the author pauses in his enumeration of places, societies, and statistics to sketch some missionary hero, to characterize an epoch, or to portray a striking situation. In these passages he is at his best; informing, judicious, and sympathetic; able to value aright and to depict with appreciation the significance of the event on which he dwells. The work of Alexander Duff in India (pp. 88-90), the romance of Uganda in Africa's missionary history (pp. 347-456), and the description of events leading to the conference of three religions in Japan (pp. 237-240), are examples of these most satisfying oases in the dry and hurried march of the history. The frank yet impartial discussion of the unfortunate controversies between the different schools of Roman Catholic missions in China (pp. 179-180); or the outspoken criticism of Roman Catholic missions in South America (pp. 409-412)—the more noteworthy in that Canon Robinson is editorial secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which represents the High Church party of the Anglican com-

munion—the estimate of the worth of mass movements in India (p. 127), and the trenchant comment upon the folly of the independent missionary (p. 305), illustrate both the author's knowledge in the field of which he writes and his firm and sound judgment in appraising its phenomena.

The following paragraph, quoted from the closing page of the book, reveals the author's sanity of mind and breadth of spirit. It shows his genius for seeing the heart of the missionary enterprise and his comparative disregard for the external forms and procedures:

“For the successful prosecution of the missionary campaign character is of greater importance than method. Many a missionary whose intellectual and other qualifications have been small, has exerted what to onlookers has appeared to be a miraculous influence by the life which he has lived in a non-Christian land. Many a mission which has adopted physical methods of propagating Christianity which appear to be wholly inconsistent with the Spirit of Christ, has achieved spiritual results which other missions that have been conducted upon the most approved lines have failed to accomplish. In both instances the influence exerted by the personal character of the individual missionary has been so strong that the wisdom or unwisdom of the methods which he has adopted has become a matter of secondary importance. It is St. Paul's character even more than his missionary methods which the missionary of to-day needs to imitate and to make his own.”

It was inevitable that a volume crowded with facts and figures, many of them comparatively unimportant, should contain inaccuracies. If the writer may judge from the pages dealing with matters with which he is particularly familiar, there are altogether a good many such slips. The American Board has no missions in South America (p. 484), and has never handed over any work in Ceylon to Singalese (p. 146); its work is altogether among Tamils. And its 322 ordained native preachers are not called missionaries (p. 484).

The volume appears as one in the series of the International Theological Library. It is therefore designed primarily for students, a work of learning and leadership for the thought of those who would survey missions as a whole and analyze their progress with scientific precision. This fact accounts, no doubt, for the method of treatment of the subject, and justifies much that would be questioned if the book were intended for the general reader. It is not planned to awaken an interest in foreign missions, or to provide the preacher with telling missionary incidents. It is not a popular treatment of a big subject. But it is a great book, worthy to stand with its

mates in the Theological Library, justifying the assignment of a volume to this theme, and presenting what is now, and we may believe for long will be, the most comprehensive and informing history of foreign missions in the English tongue; and this without forgetting Robson's translation of Warneck's *History of Protestant Missions*. One cannot read this History through, despite all its pages of mere chronology, without appreciating the vitality and the achievement of the missionary enterprise and without coming to honor the devotion, versatility, and heroism of its promoters.

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